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ABSTRACT

Overviews of the process of historical research and the writing of a successful historical essay or dissertation are presented. Historical research is defined as the systematic process of collecting and objectively evaluating data related to past occurrences to arrive at conclusions about the causes, effects, or trends of past events that may be helpful in explaining the present or anticipating the future. It is suggested that the historical research process consists of six steps: (1) selecting a suitable topic; (2) searching for evidence; (3) evaluating the evidence; (4) taking notes; (5) arranging the information into a meaningful pattern; and (6) presenting results in a way that provides the reader with a full understanding of the subject. Sources of information are discussed as well as the criteria of internal and external criticism that should be used to evaluate the research effort. Effective ways of taking notes and arranging information, the rules of citation, and the importance of form are described. Literary style and ways of constructing a truthful and readable dissertation are also considered. (SLD)

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HISTORICAL RESEARCH: GUIDELINES FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS

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Historical Research

Guidelines for Graduate Students

Historical research can be defined as the systematic process of collecting and objectively evaluating data related to past occurrences in order to test certain hypotheses (Gay, 1981). The purpose is to arrive at conclusions concerning the causes, effects or trends of past events that may help to explain present conditions or anticipate future events. Unlike scientific researchers, historians do not develop data by administering instruments to individuals, but instead have to make use of data which are already available. Although their method precludes the exercise of many control procedures, it does involve systematic data collection and analysis, as well as the confirmation or disconfirmation of hypotheses (Gay, 1981). The historian's inability to submit his conclusions to the test of experiment, forces him to exercise an even higher degree of intellectual honesty than is required from the scientific researcher.

In this search for information on how historical inquiry should be done, it was found that the books, published lectures, and articles about history and historical method varied a great deal, and few were able to point out a clear-cut way on how historical research should be done or not be done. A reason for this lack of clarity could be the historian's, what Curtis (1970) called, traditional shyness or downright secretiveness about the ways they have gone about producing their books. Every monograph or work of history, he argues, has its own private life that seldomly gets in print.

Commentators on history and the philosophy of history often refer to the historical method rather than historical methods. Beringer (1978) finds the use of the singular term acceptable in the sense that all historical research revolves around the attempt to achieve understanding, through the examining of a problem in relation to time, using chronology as a key. In his presidential addresses to the American Historical Association, held in 1950 in Chicago, Samuel Morison emphasized the fact that it did not matter what "method" the historian follows, as long as he has a sense of balance, the necessary tools of research, and a driving urge to get to the truth. Historical methodology, in his view, is a product of common sense applied to circumstances. The prime objective is, and will always remain, the illumination of the past; influencing the future should only be a secondary goal (Morison, 1951).

The Nature and Philosophy of History

> History is humanity becoming and being conscious concerning itself.
> --Droysen, cited in Barnes (1904), p. 3.

> History is the authentic and related story of action progressive through time.
> --Barnes (1904), p. 4.

> Time present and time past are both perhaps present in time future.
> --T. S. Elliot, Four Quartets, "Burnt Norton."

Nevins (1962) defines history as any integrated narrative, analysis, or description of events in the past which are written in a spirit of sincere critical inquiry for the whole truth. Although history is allied to sociology and psychology it also differs from them. Similar to the sociologist, the historian is interested in the phenomena of the masses which arise from moral tendencies or physiological necessities, and like the psychologist, he is concerned with the discovery of the internal forces which determine and explain the conduct of individuals. Here the comparison stops, however, because where the sociologist is interested, almost in abstracto, in discovering laws regulating

social existence, the historian wants concrete knowledge of what had happened. In the case of psychology we see the researcher interested in the soul of a great man and its relationship to the general knowledge of the human soul--while the historian is only interested in the influence exerted by this man on his contemporaries (Meyerhof, 1959). As early as 20 B.C. Dionyseus of Halicarnassus made the remark that "history is philosophy teaching by examples" (Menchen, 1942).

History can also be seen as a nation's memory which not only perpetuates the actions, traditions, and mistakes, but also the aspirations and hopes of it. It acts as the link between past and future, and fuses the two into one (Hockett, 1955). It does not only provide people with a sense of continuity in all their efforts, but also points out error, praises worth, and in general gives a sense of unity (Nevins, 1962).

Macchiavelli's firm belief in the necessity of people to consult the past in order to foresee the future, is echoed by Nevins when he argues that people need an understanding of their past before they are able to attain a full sense of their future. The establishment of a common tradition through the recreation of its history, Nevins goes on to say, is one of the strongest elements in the creation of an enduring organization. As a creative and inspiring force, history could be of great value to a nation. Even Napoleon, in a last instruction to the King of Rome, expressed the wish that his son may study history and reflect on it because he saw it as "the only true philosophy" (Fournier, 1940).

Although the method of research should always be scientifically based, history should also pursue a practical objective. Seeley (1895) argues that, in addition to gratifying man's natural curiosity of the past, it should also serve as a modifying agent in both the formation of present views, as well as in the forecasting of future events. Gottschalk (1951), on the other hand, sees history as being three-dimensional. It follows strict scientific rules for ascertaining verifiable facts as its methods; needs literary taste, imagination and critical standards as a narrative; and requires philosphical insight and judgment when interpreting life. In studying the "historical method" of research we thus include not only the critical examination and analysis of records, but also the synthesizing of data into reliable historical narratives and expositions. The term historiography is often applied to the imaginative reconstruction of data into a book, article, or monograph. It is rarely possible, however, to tell the story "as it actually happened," not only because of the probable incompleteness of records, but also because of the human inadequacy of imagination and speech. Care should be taken when filling the gaps to recreate and not create circumstances. (These are the limits that distinguish history from fiction, drama and fantasy (Gottschalk, 1951). Aiding the imaginative historian in this task is his ability to perceive a large amount of detail inherent in situations which he could make use of to provide vitality to the otherwise sometimes boring reality (Nevins, 1962).

Choice of a Subject

Selecting an appropriate topic is the first of six steps in the historical research process. Not until a suitable subject has been chosen, can the researcher proceed to the remaining five steps which are the tracking down of relevant evidence, the taking of notes, the critical evaluation of evidence collected, the arranging of it into a meaningful pattern, and finally, the presenting of it in a manner that will provide the reader with a full understanding of the subject (Gray, 1964).

In trying to find a solution to the problem of a suitable subject, the beginner researcher may find it helpful to ask four sets of questions (Gottschalk, 1951):

1. Which geographical area am I interested in? My country? My state? The Far East?

2. Which persons am I interested in? The Greeks? The Chinese? A famous individual? People of my state?

3. What period of time am I interested in? From the beginning till now? The 1880's until 1920?

4. What kinds of human activity concern me? Literature? Politics? Education?

An answer to these questions will give the researcher a notion of the limits of his historical interests. Beginners, Gottschalk argues, often fall into the trap of being too ambitious about the scope of a project. To delimit it, the geographical or time dimensions could be diminished, as well as the number of persons or their activities. On the other hand, the same four dimensions could be expanded upon if it seems hard to find sufficient sources of information.

Before deciding finally on a topic for research, the investigator must be certain that it meets all of the following criteria (Gray, 1964):

1. Value: Why is this problem worth investigating? Does it shed light on a significant, and in a sense universal, problem? What will be gained from this investigation?

2. Originality: Has this study been done before? If this subject has been investigated before, would it be possible to provide new evidence that is significant and substantial? Or would it be possible to give a new interpretation to the evidence that would be valid and demonstrable?

3. Practicality: Are relevant documents available? The existence of primary sources? Are funds available to cover travel and reproduction costs? Can the topic be researched in the time limits set to the researcher? Is this topic suited to the required medium--term paper, dissertation, book?

4. Unity: Does this topic provide a point of departure, a direction of progression, and the promise of specific conclusions?

By choosing a title for the research project, the author actually makes a kind of contract with the reader as to what he or she will receive. At the same time it also helps the researcher to set limits to the content. Sometimes, however, a seemingly clear, sharply defined subject conceals a multitude of different subjects, which forces the author to lengthen the title in order to narrow the limits. A wider title also helps to remove doubts as to whether information should be left out or be included in the project.

The three activities of research are thinking, reading, and writing, and like a sculptor working from visual memory, the investigator adds and takes away substance until s/he achieves the desired likeness. A concrete visible subject does not exist until the object is finished (Barzun & Graff, 1977).

Sources of Information

Libraries are the laboratories of history and to use them efficiently, the researcher should have a knowledge of their facilities and the system of classification that is being used.

Books. After determining the subject and assigning a tentative title to the research project, the next task that faces the researcher is to find out whether the topic has been discussed in an article or a book. If a specific title or the name of an author is not available, the subject headings of the card catalogue should be consulted. By consulting the card catalogues of as many libraries as possible a fairly good idea of what has been written about the subject can be formed. The next step is to locate the books that seem to relate to the research topic, and then to examine their bibliographies and footnotes for further references. A bibliography of all possible sources should be made with data arranged systematically on 3" x 5" or larger cards. While looking over books in the stacks, a habit should be made of glancing over adjacent shelves because of the possibility that other useful books on the subject may be found there. If a book is not listed in the card catalogue, it may be available in other libraries and could be loaned from them. Requests for the purchase of books not available through inter-library loan can usually be made to library personnel, and will be purchased on the recommendation of the Department Head if it appears to be of considerable value for the investigation--provided that it is available from the publisher.

Data sources. Use could be made of the computer to identify related references at a relatively low cost. Searching that would take many hours can be done in a matter of minutes. By providing key words or descriptors, various data bases can be searched for references having those descriptors. A data base search generally produces a more comprehensive review of literature than is possible in a manual search. With the exception of Dissertation Abstracts, which can be accessed back to 1961, however, articles written earlier than 1970 cannot be retrieved. Unfortunately this affects most historical research projects.

The newspaper as a source of history. There is a tendency to underestimate the value of newspapers to researchers because of the political bias of its management. It should, however, be remembered that the primary objective of newspapers was always, and still is, to produce "news."

The degree of truthfulness and reliability of reports often depend on the speed and the rush involved in getting the news "out." Names and details are apt to be distorted when an unexpected event has to be reported. News is usually gathered by large groups of reporters who often have to telephone reports in. Political conventions and scheduled meetings, on the other hand, are covered by specific persons who are, in most instances, inclined to compile very accurate reports of the proceedings. Although accuracy is never guaranteed, the fact remains that the form in which news on a certain date was presented to the public, is always of historical significance (Vincent, 1929). Unconscious evidences of the intellectual and social conditions of the time are of value to the historian. It is through advertisements, for example, that knowledge about business methods, economic questions, and the habits and moral conceptions of the people can be discovered. An understanding of transportation and communication problems can be found in the advertisements of stage lines and posts.

Newspapers and journals must be analyzed and evaluated according to the classes to which they belong, and the greater part of the contents should be regarded in the light of relics of the period. This provides inferential evidence rather than direct facts . (Vincent, 1929).

Private documents. Agreements, accounts, deeds, inventories, and similar documents are relics which bear testimony to many things that their authors were not consciously recording. Wills and deeds, for example, provide a wealth of information about relationships and the possessions of families. Diaries and personal letters rank high as historical documents, provided that they were written spontaneously with no ulterior motives. It does happen, however, that the truth is often distorted when diaries are written for "public consumption," or in the case of authors in totalitarian countries who are forced to omit passages and disguise names.

Administrative documents. These records provide insight into the scope of governments. By looking at the records of laws and regulations, tax collections, and the actions of the militia a clear picture of government control can be derived. Municipal orders, financial accounts, parish records, war dispatches, proclamations, and official announcements all add to a fuller understanding of the past.

Pictorial sources of history. Evidence of the condition of art during a certain period is provided by paintings and sculptures. While old tapestries often depict historical events, conscious attempts to represent daily living occur in almost every generation of artists (Vincent, 1929).

Photographs are of special importance to the historian beccause, with the exception of the perspective and impression of distance, it is almost as good as the original. Legally and politically, maps are important and, as a pictorial sources of history, they provide valuable inferences to the researcher. Ranging from elaborate detailed maps to crude outlines of areas, they trace the path of civilization. Oftentimes earlier map-makers have drawn characteristic animals upon the various countries, or monsters believed to inhabit the oceans. The fanciful book illustrations which are found quite often in old histories, depicting certain events of battles, could also be useful to the researcher (Vincent, 1929).

Historical Criticism

> Some things I have said of which I am not altogether confident. But that we shall be better and braver and less helpless if we think that we ought to inquire than we should have been if we indulged in the idle fancy that there was no knowing and no use in seeking to know what we do not know; that is a theme upon which I am ready to fight in word and deed, to the utmost of my power.
>
> Plato, Socratic Dialogues, "Meno," p. 23.

The aim of the historical researcher is to ascertain facts because it will form the bases of all conclusions and generalizations. Statements are the raw materials with which the historian works, and should not be mistaken for facts. It could, however, be facts but this should never be taken for granted. If possible, the investigator should make such use of statements that through them he will arrive at facts (Hockett, 1961). This is not easy as Plutarch attested many years ago when he said: "So very difficult a matter it is to trace and find out the truth of anything by history" (Bartlett, 1900).

There are many reasons why statements may only be partially true or even totally untrue. In the first place, it could be that the person commenting on an event may not have personally witnessed it; secondly, s/he may have lied deliberately; thirdly, s/he may have colored the report because of personal prejudices; and lastly, s/he may have been incompetent to make an accurate observation. Johnson (1928) argues that doubt should be regarded as the beginning of wisdom in historical studies. The investigator should shake off the credulity of natural man and his inclination to follow the authority of the printed word. He goes on to say that although all human beings see with their eyes and hear with their ears the process of perception is not direct and simple. The mind has a tendency to fill in the gaps of sense impressions. No wonder that a newspaper woman once said that all people are more or less unconscious liars! Dewey (1957) postulates that since memory is more emotional than intellectual, the revivals of it are seldom literal.

External criticism. Two separate processes are involved in the critical examination of statements (Hockett, 1955). The first is preliminary and preparatory in the sense that it provides data that the second process employs. It is called external criticism, and it involves the examination of documents with the specific purpose of establishing authenticity. Questions about the time when it was written and printed, the place where it originated, and authorship need to be answered.

Generally speaking an undated document is worthless for historical purposes (Johnson, 1925). The investigator needs to know whether the document is the original or a copy; in the latter case whether it is a correct copy. Forgeries need not ordinarily be a threat to researchers because the contents of most historical libraries are carefully sifted and re-sifted by experts (Nevins, 1962). Although entirely cheating in documents are rare, dubious ones are found quite often. While the authorship of a document may be entirely authentic, Nevins (1962) warns researchers that parts of it may be highly treacherous. Truth and misstatements are mingled sometimes unconsciously. Many a letter, document, or autobiography which were originally quite genuine have been revised, amended, or so tampered with that some parts became untrustworthy.

The integrity of many written documents has been vitiated by political or religious censorships. Few newspapers printed during the regimes of Mussolini, Hitler, or Stalin, for example, could be regarded as an authentic representation of what was originally written for its columns.

Bad editing, bad translations, and careless printing can also corrupt literature. Not all translations are bad, but it should be remembered that all translations represent change. In a subtle way it alters the flavor of the original.

Internal criticism. Having established the external validity of a document, the researcher then applies internal criticism to determine the meaning and trustworthiness of statements--not documents. Knowing that the document is genuine or that the reading is true to the original, the emphasis now shifts from document to statement when the investigator now scrutinizes the reading to make sure that he understands each statement (Hockett, 1955). This phase is known as Positive Criticism. It is important to avoid reading into a statement a meaning not intended by the author. Taking words out of context amounts to intellectual dishonesty and should be guarded against. The quest must be for facts even if it upsets a hypothesis of the investigator. The Positive Criticism phase is not concerned with truthfulness and reliability, but only with the correct meaning of a statement.

Moving to the Negative Criticism phase, the investigator now questions the accuracy of statements. It could be untrustworthy because of the ignorance of the maker or some other form of incompetence in his part. In his search for truth, the investigator is looking for an answer on four basic questions (Gray, 1964):

1. Competence: Was the author in a position to be knowledgeable concerning what really happened? Was he an outsider?

2. Objectivity: What were the bias and motives of the author? Is there any reason to suspect that there was distortion of the truth either consciously or unconsciously? Are there any tell-tale signs of amplification in order to make the story more interesting? Is there an element of self interest detected? To retain the true picture of events, the subjective element must be eliminated (Johnson, 1928).

3. Transmission: How much time has elapsed between the event's occurrence and the recording of the facts? Did the author later rewrite the notes? Gray (1964) notes that even after a single day a person's memory begins subtly to revise reality, and to magnify his own wisdom and the righteousness of his cause. Another question that needs to be asked, is in what kind of mood was the author when he sat down to write his report. Did he do it in a spirit of anger, apology, despair, elation, or judicial calmness? His use of specific words often gives a clue to this problem. To whom did he address himself? Was he writing to a confidant, or to someone he was trying to convince? Black (1926) quotes Hume saying that the historian needs to know men intimately if he is to write about them correctly. He should be able to gain a knowledge of their inclinations and motives from their expressions and gestures. Fortified with this knowledge, he should then be able to push aside veils and pretexts and to penetrate to the real influences shaping conduct, and to give truth and virtue their true weight.

4. Meaning: An awareness of changing denotations and connotations of words is necessary to discover the true meaning of statements. Pitfalls of irony and figures of speech may lead the investigator astray. A knowledge of slang and special vocabularies of different levels of society is necessary if research is done concerning these groups.

In addition to the four criteria for internal criticism mentioned by Gray (1969), Gay (1981) adds another one, namely, consistency of data. Each piece of evidence, he says, must be compared with all other pieces to determine the amount of agreement. If disagreement is found, the information may be suspect. On the other hand, the very fact that different sources are in agreement automaticaly validate their accuracy.

Although no historian can hope to uncover every untruth, half-truth, or downright deception lurking in the raw materials s/he has to deal with, s/he should never cease to search for the truth. The relentless demand for accuracy requires the scrutiny of all materials used (Barzun & Graff, 1977). The critical method must become so much a part of the researcher that its application accompanies the research process all the way. Hockett (1955) believes that a beginner should become acquainted with critical principles before s/he begins the research process, for then, he says, it will be approached with the proper mental orientation. Without good sense and judgment, it is a waste of time to engage in historical pursuits. Learning the "rules" will save the beginner from learning "the hard way" which will be very time consuming. Even with the help of the rules, the development of a sound critical attitude, as well as an ability to adapt the procedure to the requirements of individual projects, are still essential.

Note Taking

Gottschalk (1951) sees the taking of notes as the most dreary part of the historian's work. To learn when to take notes, or to take only brief ones, is at least as desirable as it is to learn when to take lengthy ones. To help beginner historians he has a few general suggestions:

1. Avoid the temptation to take notes on material that seems interesting. It consumes time that could have been spent taking notes that are relevant. On the question as to what is relevant and how to keep relevance in the forefront of one's mind, he suggests that one's subject should always be thought of in terms of a sentence, rather than a topic. By converting the topic into a proposition, and the proposition then into a hypothesis, the problem of relevance is clarified. By breaking it up into its component parts, it will not only indicate what is relevant to what, but will at the same time cause a unifying theme to emerge.

2. Provided that beginners do not over-estimate their ability to remember, full notes should not be taken of familiar, unauthoritative or easily remembered data.

3. A full note of quotable material should be made whenever the likelihood exists that the exact words of a source may be quoted in the final composition. This is usually the case when picturesque, authoritative, unfamiliar, or contradictory information is found.

The quoted note should be a meticulous one. Spelling and punctuation must be studiously retained. Deliberately omitted words should be indicated by the ellipsis (. . .) and words that appear in italics in the source should be underlined. Ellipses or underlining in the source should be indicated within brackets immediately after its appearance.

Photographic reproduction may be a solution for lengthy material. In making abstracts, condensations, or summaries, comments may occur to the researcher which s/he desires to jot down. Care is needed to distinguish these comments from the rest of the notes. Hocket (1955) suggests that personal comments should be enclosed in brackets, just as if notes consisted entirely of quoted matter.

The reminder note is used when the source is the note-taker's property or belongs to a library to which s/he has ready access. Usually just the author, the title, page number, and a one line topic sentence are necessary. Since the book is easily available, it will probably be time saving to return to the book, rather than to make a full analysis at the time of note taking.

A conscientious note taker soon learns little labor-saving devices to avoid time and mental exertion. Indicating why a note was taken in cases where it may not be obvious, is one of them. The habit of writing notes to oneself suggesting queries, insertions, hypotheses, cross references, and those brilliant ideas that come in the middle of the night, needs to be cultivated. Cross references are best made as soon as the possibility of their usefulness becomes apparent to avoid losing valuable information (Gottschalk, 1951).

Bibliographical notes are of two kinds: Those on titles to be used, and those on titles that have been used. The first need only contain enough information to enable the investigator to identify the item. Fuller notes might mean a waste of time, since the title may prove to be valueless on examination. If the book proves to be useful a fuller bibliographical note becomes desirable.

Material for notes. Gottschalk (1951) suggests that the 3" x 5" card is too small, too thick, and too expensive to use for the purpose of historical research. A 5 1/2 " is more suitable in his opinion. If both sides are used it should be sufficient. The use of paper clips or staples is unwise. Filing cards with the tabs upon which headings may be written are of vital importance to a good system of notes. Notes should be stored in a standard filing box.

Arranging notes. In context notes chronological order is usually the best in the early stages of investigation, and will probably be the best in all stages if the final composition is to be a narrative (Gottschal, 1951).

With a topical arrangement cross-reference problems become more difficult. Nevertheless it remains the best arrangement if the final composition is to be argumentative or expository. A topical arrangement may be by persons, societies or groups, by areas, by kinds of activities, or by some combination of these. Topics may also have a roughly chronological relation to each other. This would be true where the development of a society during a certain fixed period is described. A chronological order is usually discernable within the separate topics.

Construction

Having exhaustively collected and carefully evaluated evidence, the time has come to fit it all together in a pattern of reconstructed truth. Imaginative insight, logical organization, integration, and scholarly objectivity are necessary to accomplish this (Gray, 1964).

The primary secret of a well-constructed dissertation is a fully integrated outline which chronologically, and by component topics and areas, traces the progress of the subject. The general structure of the outline, and the research and writing that develops around it, should be analogous to a fundamental artifact of modern building construction. It should not be difficult to proceed to the first draft constructed out of information provided by the notes.

Even at this stage it should be more than a series of quotations. Paraphrases are always preferable to long quotations. To construct an essay largely of quotations would be equivalent to presenting the reader with a pile of raw material (Hockett, 1955). This would mean that the investigator had failed to convert statements into the facts that are necessary to form a basis for interpretations and conclusions. Writing history is an act of creation and not simply the patching together of bits of information obtained from the various sources. Kent (1941) believes that something which is wholly one's own must be added to the material of research. Using his powers of interpretation and criticism the researcher will be able to produce a more flexible and graceful presentation. A conscious and deliberate effort should be made, however, to free all writing from prejudices or excitement that could warp the statements which one is composing off the raw material. Hockett (1955) stresses the importance for the researcher to apply the same critical tests to his own writing that he has used to examine his sources.

The draft should bring together all the facts that are to enter the completed essay. This means not only events, but also opinions and beliefs, whether it is true or false. In this connection, Hockett argues that much history has been made by the fact that people held false beliefs. While institutions are a fact, a relationship between facts is also a fact. Sound generalizations or conclusions are facts, and the writer who limits his production to a narrative of events, void of interpretation, turns out a barren story. It is true, however, that such history is more difficult to write and more liable to error, but it is also more worthwhile if the writer has real ability.

Little heed needs to be paid to the literary quality of the first draft. The temptation to polish paragraphs at this stage should be resisted. Hockett advises graduate students, however, not to submit a draft until some literary touches have been given--unless s/he is prepared to be misjudged, or unless his or her committee or advisor wishes to examine the draft solely with reference to content. Especially should the advisor not be asked to read each chapter separately. The student should do his best to turn out a completed piece of work by independent effort.

It is essential when developing the draft to pay careful attention to the logical sequence of ideas and topics. Proceed from what the reader may be presumed to know to that which the dissertation is supposed to add to their knowledge. The writer of history, says Hockett, should give his or her special theme its proper setting, not only in the introduction at the beginning of the book but at every stage where it is required for clearness and symmetry.

Kent (1941) believes that the best historical work is done when the student pauses long enough in his research to write down fresh and new ideas, to think out an artful transition, and to give a specific identity to a "mildewed" generalization. A thesis should be a living organic thing right from the moment the first book is opened. Watching it come to life, growing in one's command of the subject, shaping and reshaping hypotheses from the vantage point of increased knowledge are the rewarding factors in doing historical research.

Although historical writing is usually the simple exposition of concrete matters, it should, to be true exposition, have as it prime characteristic a continuous flow of clearly stated ideas. Kent argues that the hypotheses and outline of a research project evolve in the process of research. The investigator often starts his or her work with no more than three tentative hypotheses. As the work progresses, new hypotheses are added and old ones are changed.

The function of form. Kent (1941) defines the form of an essay or dissertation as the order and the distribution of emphasis as well as the coherence of the argument. The most visible failure of form comes from wrong emphasis. Because the reader's mind cannot give equal attention to all parts of a book, a paragraph, or a sentence, guidance by way of emphasis must be provided so that correct understanding will result (Barzun & Graff, 1977). When groupings, subordination, and logical lines are missing, the result is a collection of disjointed ideas and a total lack of understanding on the part of the reader. To make the narrative flow, an ordering of the parts and transitions are necessary. Chronology is not a sufficient solution, since a strict chronological order usually involves the mixing of great and small events without due subordination. This often results in notoriously unreadable chronicles. Barzun and Graff (1977) suggest the use of a topical order for the historian who wants to be read. They do warn, however, that it should be remembered that all historical events take place in time and that a pure topical order will deprive a story of all coherence.

Since neither chronological nor purely topical order will do, it seems that the solution lies in a combination of the two arrangements. In a combined form the chronology will move forward simultaneously while each topic or natural subdivision is discussed in totality. To combine topic and time successfully a knowledge of the art of transition is essential. Transition as a device of emphasis is an important part of form. To be effective a mass of words must have form which simultaneously satisfies the demands of unity (one thing at a time), chronology (a series of things happening one after the other), and coherence (ease in passing from one to the other, keeping the reader interested).

Chapters. The function of a chapter is to cover one good-sized topic comfortably, and provides so much reading as an average reader can do in one sitting. According to Barzun and Graff (1977) a fifty-page chapter is ordinarily too long. Twenty to twenty-five double-spaced typewritten pages, consisting of 6,000 to 7,500 words is a moderate length. If chapters are too brief, coherence suffers as a result of too many breaks. Chapters should also be of approximately the same length, and together they should add up to the story as a whole, with nothing left out and no overlapping, but with as many cross references as are necessary for maintaining internal clarity.

Paragraphs. Paragraphs are little chapters and the same rules that govern chapters apply to the construction of paragraphs. The topic sentence has the same function as the introductory paragraph and within the paragraph sentences ought to flow in a logical sequence. Words such as "therefore," "on the other hand," "moreover" and "however" can be used to bridge gaps between sentences. Parallel items require parallel paragraphs (Van Leunen, 1979). An introduction, for example, may be followed by three parallel items grouped together, but if two of these items have their own paragraphs one may not be grouped with the introduction. While paragraphs should never exceed thirty lines, variety in the length of paragraphs is useful in breaking the monotony.

Citations or reference notes. Many statements in a dissertation or essay demand validation. Readers have the right to ask, "Where did s/he get this?" Not all statements, however, will be questioned. The broad rule that could be applied states; the source for every fact, opinion, or conclusion (not your own) stated in the text must be cited (Hockett, 1955). Most of the data used by a historical researcher are derived. The only original contributions are own opinions, conclusions, and interpretations. The one exception to this fundamental rule is that common facts of general history which may be assumed to be general knowledge, need not be cited.

In the case of several facts drawn from the same source and presented consecutively, it is permissible to cite the source only once at the conclusion of the paragraph, or series of paragraphs if the continuity of the passage is clear to the eye (Hockett, 1955). Alternatively, an authority or source may be cited in an initial note preceeding the paragraphs or series of statements. Although scholarly work demands the firsthand use of sources, a researcher should, if he does use a secondary quote, cite the person to whom he is indebted for the reference. This need not be done if s/he finds the source or quote himself and personally has looked up the reference. Where necessary, citing should be done because it is a courtesy scholars owe each other (Van Leunen, 1979).

Use quotations sparingly and paraphrase as much as possible, is the golden rule. If the paraphrase agrees with the original in a key word or group of words, look at it again and try to make some changes. However, if the original is in no way striking, there is no need to add quotation marks (Van Leunen, 1979). If the use of several quotations is inevitable, care should be taken to vary introductions.

A few "don'ts" in writing. It is practically impossible to tell a person how to write. Beyond the advice to strive for clarity, only negative instruction, in the form of a number of "don'ts," is possible (Kent, 1941).

1. Don't use stilted language.
2. Watch out for cliches.
3. Avoid "elegant variations."
4. Avoid current collegiate slang.
5. Beware of the metaphor.
6. Use the passive voice as seldom as possible.
7. Avoid "adverbial dressing gowns"--meaning empty words such as, "thoroughly mistaken," "wholly unjustifiable," "fully recognize." In adding these words the author is straining to prove instead of making a clear judgment (Barzun & graff, 1977).

Literary Style in History

Nevins (1962) maintains that "the ideal in history is a work on which infinite labor has been first expended to obtain and utilize the materials, and infinite plans have then been expanded to hide the labor."

How to arrange a mass of information, how to proportion it, and how to make it truly interesting involves study, discipline, and practice, he says. The ultimate goal for the historian is to project a combination of literary sparkle and scientific adequacy.

Nearly all writers who have tried any sustained piece of historical composition have had difficulties in:

1. Planning their work. Reconciling temporal order with topical order is so difficult a task that the best of historians fail (Nevins, 1983).

2. Achieving progression. All historical writings must have progression and this progression must demonstrate a relation between cause and effect.

3. Assigning value or weight appropriately. Novices of history often fail to bring out major facts into bold relief. To bring out necessary proportion, Nevins advises beginners to cultivate generalizations and always to move from the particular to the general or vice versa--but never from the particular to the particular. It must be kept in mind that research and ideas must be combined to produce interpretation, and that human warmth and vividness result when research and imagination combine.

People read history not only for entertainment, but also for instruction about the past, for guidance to the future, and above all for inspiration. History is also being read for the purpose of obtaining a view of the conditions, limitations, and potentialities of leadership, or to show how much institutions depended upon tradition, character, habit, and physical and economic circumstances.

The possibility of writing history in an interesting manner depends upon the topic chosen. Constitutional history, for example, does not lend itself to much grace of style. Vincent (1929) quotes H. Taine, the French author, saying that while history was both an art and a science, its style must be not only picturesque, but also precise, having its divisions well marked, its laws well proved, and its inductions as correct as

those of natural history. In the words of David Hume (Menchen, 1942), "The first quality of a historian is to be true and impartial; and the next is to be interesting" (Letter to William Mare, October 1754).

The historian should feel a sense of responsibility to the public; to always describe events "simply as they happened" and to understand the motives of individuals and groups. The French word "mesure," meaning balance and proportion, is a valuable quality for the historian (Morison, 1951). Nothing happens in a vacuum. Various forces influence actions and most stories have two sides which should be considered by the historian. Through his imagination he needs to enter into the feelings of his subjects in order to portray them with sympathetic warmth or appropriate indignation. "Unless it be the dull pedantry of the average doctoral dissertation in history, there is no quality more repugnant to readers than a chilly impartiality" (Trevelyan, 1949).

George Macauley Trevelyan, the well-known historian, once said that the ideal history requires a more various combination of qualities of head, heart, science, and art than any other study undertaken by man, and that it was thus no wonder that "there has never yet been the perfect historian!" Although this may be true, the fact remains that there will always be historians, working and delving in the past, firmly believing with Cicero that:

> History is the witness of the times, the torch of truth, the life of memory, the teacher of life, and the messenger of antiquity.
>
> --Cicero: De oratore, II, 80 B.C.

Summary

This paper has offered an overview of the process of historical research, as well as the writing of a successful historical essay or dissertation. Historical research was defined as the systematic process of collecting and objectively evaluating data related to past occurrences in order to arrive at conclusions concerning the causes, effects, or trends of past events that may be helpful in explaining present conditions or to anticipate future events.

It was shown that the process consisted of six steps, viz., the selection of a suitable subject, the searching for evidence, the evaluating of it, the taking of notes, the arranging of it into a meaningful pattern, and the presentation of the information in a manner that will provide the reader with a full understanding of the subject. Various sources of information were discussed, as well as the different criteria of external and internal criticism which should be used to evaluate it. Effective ways of taking notes, how to arrange it, the rules of citation, and the importance of form were elaborated upon, concluding with a discussion of literary style and how to construct a truthful, yet readable, dissertation.

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